

Small Town

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Summary: Rated T. The Hofferson family is already breaking apart, and pulling it a little more would only destroy it. They were not the richest, nor the happiest family in all of Berk. But Astrid tried so hard to remain measured. She was thankful she even had a family.

## 1. Chapter 1

Hi everyone! It's 10:30 AM and I didn't have to go to school today due to a snow storm (Thanks Jack Frost). So I thought I could pull off a story instead of sitting around for a whole day with nothing to do.

I guess you could call this story a new version of 'Safe and Sound' (which was deleted due to my lack of self-confidence). I say 'I guess' because the plot is quite different so it can also be a new story, which means **\*\*you don't need to know it to understand this. \*\*(they only have a minor relation)**. Just pointing it out there for any of you who thought I completely abandoned it (which I kind of did for a while). But if you haven't read it then that whole paragraph was useless knowledge to you. BUT, here we go!

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 1<p>

Astrid Hofferson.

She was a hard worker. One of the hardest workers in the village, in fact. And she had plenty of strength and confidence to get her through it. She'd normally spend the hours of her day training in the ring, or violently planting her trusty axe into a tree, trying to find new ways to beat her classmates in Dragon Training. But training was no longer needed thanks to one Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. But there was still plenty of work to be done around the Village. Everybody had their own occupations which were required in an

isolated Village. The people needed to keep themselves in Survival's Hands and for a Viking, that wasn't an option. With the no-longer occupation of training, Astrid was assigned to helping out around the house. There were chores to be done, \_lots\_ of them. Since young teenagers like herself were a few years too short to be risking their lives out at sea like most adults, they would help out with housework instead where they were safe from all the outrageous occupational hazards that the gods could plant on their shoulders.

Astrid opened her eyes, looking around as she blinked a few times, her eyes adjusting themselves to the morning light. The sunlight shone beautifully through her only window on the left of her bed. Sometimes the amount of light could be disturbing, but her mother always told her she did not need curtains. Those were for the wealthier households. Astrid knew she had another typical day of work ahead of her, but she did not mind. The girl was very outgoing and energetic, and as a maiden of the village, she knew she was going to have enjoy her day's work whether she liked it or not because women were not excused. No one was for that matter.

She sat up and flipped the cotton blanket off of her as she turned her body to plant her feet on the ground, and slid right into her wool boots. She wore a dirty-white colored night gown that reached just under her knees with long, puffy sleeves and two pieces of string tied into a perfect bow at her neckline. Her gown flowed free of the scrunched up fabric as she stood up and walked over to wooden vanity at the other end of the room. It had a few trinkets on the surface, ones that she had received from friends and family throughout the years. They lay all around her looking glass that stood right in the center of the vanity.

As Astrid sat down, she picked up her brush and began to lightly comb through her hair, holding pieces of hair with one hand and brushing it out with the other so she didn't pull to hard. Her hair was long, a little higher than her middle back. Long hair was a pain to deal with, especially in the morning when it would get all tangled from the sleep the night before. But Astrid didn't mind spending all the time she needed brushing out knots. Most women would keep their hair up in a bun or in a braid, short or long. But Astrid would sometimes decide to keep her hair down and let it flow down her back like a river. She loved the feel of it. It made her feel free and wild, as she would ride on Stormfly through Berk's clouds. But she figured today would be really hot and sunny, and with all the chores that was soon to come, she decided to put it in her usual braid and leave that for a cooler day.

After changing into a loose, dark green tunic with puffy short sleeves and her regular leggings, she hopped downstairs to the kitchen. She would not normally be too hungry as soon as she woke up, so most of the time she would wait a couple of hours instead of stuffing something down her throat when she wasn't hungry. She walked in the room to a sink full of dirty dishes. Her parents must have already eaten.

"Yep. Those are for me." She sighed to herself. Her parents were the only other people living in the house, and they were mostly out during the day. Sometimes she would wake up and her father, Eirik would be in the living room silently sitting in his wooden rocking chair with a mug. No one ever touched that rocking chair. And he wouldn't greet her, for he was rarely the one to speak, or even

wear on a smile on his old face. Often he would angrily demand his wife and daughter around to do whatever he wanted with no complaints from them. Women were not supposed to deny their husbands or fathers.

Without hesitation, the girl immediately began to wash the dishes, grabbing a nearby cloth and a homemade bar of soap. This was only the first step of her day. Once she finished which didn't take long at all, she dried them with a new clean cloth and placed them in their proper places in various cupboards and cabinets. To finish it off, she quickly wiped the counters clear of any crumbs and spills, and then headed towards the front door. Her parents always seemed to make a mess and never clean it up. But Astrid never complained. She guessed it was understandable that they had to leave quite early to get things done around the village.

She didn't need a cloak or even a light, long-sleeved tunic for outside. It snowed often so she would keep one neatly folded right by the door in case it got too cold or there was a bit of wind. It was actually one of the few hottest days of the year, and that was soon to be over. The rain was to begin within a few days.

There was also a large woven basket that would sit at the door which Astrid had actually crafted herself. She hasn't had much experience in crafting, but she picked up a few convenient skills from Ruffnut over the years. She picked it up with both hands, shutting the door behind her and headed to the local market. Unfortunately, the Hofferson's did not have their own backyard garden like some other households, so Astrid visited the market often in able to keep the family supplies in good amount.

It was rather busy as it was most mornings, but because of the admirable weather these days, a lot more villagers came outside. There was also a great supply of new food coming in lately from other islands and tribes during the current trading period. Astrid walked with her basket in her arms, up to the various stands of food where mostly women were lined up, picking up their week supply of groceries. Astrid examined all the food, deciding which ones looked good to her. The blonde Viking loved to try new things so she would often attempt to look for foods she had never tried before, and pick those ones up first.

There were various fruits and vegetables, meats, eggs and bread, everything a Viking could think of. Astrid was beginning to get hungry just by looking at them. She spotted some unfamiliar fruit in front of her as she heaved her basket to her hip, wrapping one arm around it and slightly leaning to the side, picking up a handful of the berries. She looked closely at them. They were very small and round with a sort of blood red color. She moved her hand closer to her face so she could get a better look.

"Those are currants, dear." Astrid's head snapped up to the smiling woman behind the stand in front of her who innocently hooked her hands in front of her. She had dark brown curly hair that was put up in a messy bun and she wore a slightly dirty beige apron atop her patterned red tunic. Astrid looked at her and before she could speak the woman cut her off. "Well, goo on. Take theeim." The woman said cheerfully, smiling brightly.

"Thank you." Astrid smiled back innocently.

She continued walking along the stands, looking down at all the food as she picked up some corn and a large cabbage, along with a few tomatoes and apples, rotating them in her hand a couple of times to make sure that the ones she picked up weren't bruised or misshaped on any sides. Then she moved closer to the end where all the bread and meat were, not hesitating to grab a loaf of bread, a pile of shredded boar meat and a couple of chicken legs for Stormfly. Her basket was by now more than half full so she paid and headed home with a heavy basket in both her arms. She passed many villagers on her way back to her house, saying 'hello' to nearly every one of them even if she didn't know them. She was sure she knew everyone's names but there were many she had never actually talked to before. But everybody on Berk was really friendly, and she wasn't ashamed to say hello to a stranger.

"Astrid!" Astrid heard her name and almost struggled to not drop her basket, arching her back and shuffling her feet as she turned around. She smiled brightly as she saw Hiccup running towards her and holding a hand in the air. He barely stumbled through the grass as he ran to her, his silky hair glistening in the bright sunlight to appear an incredibly bright red color. "Astrid." He said once more, a warm smile on his face.

"Hey!" The girl cheerfully greeted with a huge and welcoming grin.

Odin, she loved seeing him no matter what time of day. Even if she was completely miserable and helpless the boy would still somehow manage to make her smile one way or another. He was unique. He had something special inside of him that she couldn't really pick out, in few words at least. He'd take her home when it was late at night or hug her tight until she fell asleep after having a nightmare. He made her feel like a little kid again. He did everything she never deserved and she couldn't thank him enough for that. Astrid never really had many friends in her life because for the most of it, it was train and win, no time for friends. Of course she talked to Snotlout, Fishlegs, and Tuffnut often and spent time with them more than anyone else but she wouldn't really call them \_friends.\_ They were just there. And the only other teenagers on the small island.

Neither Hiccup nor Astrid knew what their relationship was in 'romantic terms.' But they were definitely more than best friends. The whole Village could see it, and they themselves could too. But they didn't mind that both of them had been asked by an unimaginable amount of people what their relationship exactly was. All they knew was that they have done more than a kiss many times. The two of them were considered the most popular rumor in the entire village at one time. But yet, they still did not mind. Publicity was not a problem for them simply because it's been years since the beginning of their affections, and now it was completely used to that nobody ever minded enough to wonder anymore, and instead treated them no different from anyone else.

"Here, let me help you with that." The boy politely took the large basket from her arms and heaved it over one shoulder next to his ear, keeping it up with one arm and slightly leaning to one side as the two of them continued to walk together. Astrid immediately felt the relief of the released weight and was happy to walk straight

again.

"Thanks." She said rather shyly with a smile, looking down at the ground for a warm second, then glanced at Hiccup and back to the path of grass in front of her. The boy was impressively strong, and had gained plenty of muscle throughout the years and yet still remained in his skinny figure. Astrid loved that. He had also grown in height by a little bit, enough for Astrid to look up at him now. No one had ever thought that Hiccup the Toothpick would grow or gain on any level.

They continued to make their way to Astrid's house, mostly in silence for it was a short walk, but definitely a relief from that basket for Astrid's weak figure. They could hear the faint chatting of all the villagers behind them along with the crunching of the grass underneath their feet and the occasional roars or wing-flapping of the various dragons soaring above them, flooding the bright blue sky.

The two of them arrived at the Hofferson house shortly after. Astrid stepped up the couple of stairs that led up to her front door, the wooden steps lightly creaking underneath her feet as she turned around and looked down to see Hiccup at the bottom. "There you are, Milady." Hiccup said cheerfully with that adorable smile and gave Astrid back her basket who gladly took it in both her arms.\_ God's, he was such a gentlemen.\_

She giggled. "Thanks, again." Astrid said and before she knew it, he climbed one step and leaned his head up so he could delicately kiss her cheek. Her skin felt soft and smooth underneath his lips as many goosebumps had flown throughout Astrid's entire body.

"You're welcome." He said a little over a whisper, his voice sounded beyond delicate and gentle and his face stood just inches from hers as he never seemed to drop that adorable smile. Astrid could see her starstruck reflection in his bright green eyes. They were the greenest shade of grass, with the slightest hint of light brown.

He quickly turned around, jogging a few steps before turning back around to face her, hurriedly taking large steps backwards as he spoke. "I'll see you tomorrow?" He asked her in the short distance.

Astrid laughed and called back. "I wouldn't miss it!" She gladly accepted for she liked to stay away from home as much as possible because when she did, she didn't have anybody to tell her what to do and what not to do. Astrid was the type that loved the feeling of being free and when she wasn't at home with her parents, she didn't feel so under control, especially when she was with Hiccup.

She watched him happily turn around, continue to run and did a goofy jump in the air as he kicked out his legs and 'woohoo'd' in victory. Astrid laughed loudly and a couple of nearby villagers turned their heads to look at the amusing dork that was clearing embarrassing himself without a care which made Astrid laugh even more and shake her head. She loved the times where he seemed like he could never be happier. "That's my Hiccup." She whispered to herself then walked back into the house with a smile glued on her face.

Barely struggling to open the door with one hand, Astrid used her

chin to help support the basket as she closed the door behind her with her foot before heavily plopping the closed basket onto the floor in front of her. She let out a sigh. "Mom?" She called out loud enough to be heard throughout the whole house since her mother MÃ;rÃ-a would often come home before Astrid did whenever she went out in the mornings. "I'm home!"

"Oh! Yes, dear. Did you bring the cabbage?" She heard her mother call from upstairs.

"Yes, mom." she called back. Picking up the basket once more, Astrid headed towards the kitchen while her mother came down the stairs with a basket of laundry in her arms.

"Oh, good," Her mother continued. "I need you to feed that dragon of yers. She keeps squawking and I don't know what. You wanted to keep her here, that's yer problem, not mine. I got enough work ta doo around here." Astrid could only roll her eyes and make mocking faces as her mother rambled, completely aware that she always makes things harder than they need to be. She did what she was told and plopped the grocery basket onto the counter, grabbing a couple of chicken legs from it and went outside to the back of the house.

The girl was immediately welcomed by the squawking of her Deadly Nadder as she opened and walked through the gate of her backyard. Stormfly excitedly approached her, flapping her wings everywhere and twitching her head to the side. She must have been here for a while if she was this excited. Astrid's parents made it clear on the first day of Stormfly's stay, she would not be allowed in the house so Astrid would usually let Stormfly do whatever she intended for the day; to fly around with the other dragons and walk around the village. And then at night she would know to come home and sleep where she always would in the backyard. She loved it there. She had her own comfortable pen with a roof and lots of hay. And she also knew to be present for when Astrid feeds her. She wouldn't miss that.

"Hey, girl!" The blonde greeted cheerfully, stroking the scaly blue snout of her Deadly Nadder. "Ah, sorry I'm late. You must be hungry." She said. "Yeah well, here you go." She took a few steps back and threw the chicken in her hands towards Stormfly who caught it perfectly in her mouth and swallowed in nearly seconds. Astrid threw another one, and Stormfly caught it perfectly once more.

It was almost a routine for Astrid to give her her daily feed of chicken because she loved it so much. She wouldn't have the right energy without it. Astrid smiled lightly as she looked at her dragon, then brightened her face and smile as if she just thought of an idea. "Hey! You wanna go for a ride?" Astrid nearly jumped, receiving an excited squawk of agreement from Stormfly. She laughed as the Nadder began to excitedly prance on the spot. "Alright, alright, calm down." She said with a hint of a laugh in her voice when the Nadder tried hard to hold still so that Astrid could climb on. She walked over to Stormfly's side and extended her arms up so she could grab on to the saddle with both hands, using her arm strength to pull herself up as she carried a leg over and straddled the back of her dragon. "Okay," Astrid leaned down closer to Stormfly's head as she held tight on the leather saddle. "I'm ready." Then Stormfly open her wide wings, bent her knees, and gladly leapt into the sky.

Later that night, Astrid and her mother set the dinner table while her father sat quietly in the living room in his usual chair reading some sort of bad shaped book that he had along with his whole other shelf of books that Astrid had no interest to. He had just gotten home about ten minutes earlier and didn't normally speak to his wife or daughter so it was rather quiet for the only thing that could be heard was the clanking of the plates as the two of them put out some cutlery on the outside of the table with different dishes of food in the center. There was also a large wooden plate with a freshly hunted chicken, a basket of small baked potatoes and homemade bread, and another small plate of different vegetables that Astrid had picked up at the market earlier. Both women had their own creative skills that they gradually gained throughout their years and used that to their advantage when setting the table at dinner, so they'd lay out neatly folded colored napkins underneath each plate and a gardenia flower in the center of the table with a couple of leaves around it for decoration, a different flower for each day.

The two women sat down quietly when they were finished, MÃ;rÃ-a brushing her hands underneath the back of her thighs to straighten out her dress as she stooped to sit down. Eirik cleared his throat and stood up, noticing that dinner was ready and then walked over to the table, his footsteps echoing in the silent air as he set down the book on the dinner table next to his plate and took a seat across from Astrid, MÃ;rÃ-a on the end. He immediately began to dig his large hands through all the food and put some on his plate, Astrid and MÃ;rÃ-a soon following after him for they were quite hungry themselves and were not going to waste their times waiting for him to say something. Astrid's plate was a little less than half full, with one bannock and some vegetables on the side. She didn't usually eat a lot. She didn't like to.

Nobody said anything for quite some time so she hesitated, put her hands in her lap innocently and shyly hunched her shoulders, lightly clearing her throat before speaking. "Dad?" She finally asked.

Eirik only mumbled a 'Hmm?' as he continued filling up his plate until it was nearly a mountain of food, then picked up his fork and knife and started eating without looking at his daughter. That wasn't exactly the response she wanted. Astrid cleared her throat again, glancing down at her clenched hands in her lap and then back at him, wondering if she should even be speaking. "Um." She paused. "I took Stormfly for a flight today." She began, her voice higher, trying to see if she could start up a decent conversation with him.

She was being patient; she was always patient. But she knew one day she would eventually come to the point that waiting was too hard. Well, it was already hard, but she loved her father. He was her father and she wasn't going to dishonor him or her family. Eirik just loved being grumpy and minding his own business but no one understood why. Maybe it was best that way. The family is already breaking apart and pulling it a little more would only destroy it. They were not the richest, nor the happiest family in all of Berk. But Astrid tried so hard to remain measured. She was thankful she even had a family.

"Did you?" He asked with only a glance up at Astrid but then back to his plate as he cut through his chicken. It wasn't enough for her,

his tone didn't sound amused, but at least he replied with words. And the glance was a plus.

"Yeah," The girl smiled and spoke a little louder since he had given her more than one syllable this time. "I think she's really starting to get the hang of that new saddle now. She used to get really irritated by it. Maybe it's because she didn't like the texture of the new leather against her back?" Astrid paused and looked at her father to see if he would say anything, possibly give an opinion if she was lucky. But he only continued to stuff his mouth as if he hadn't eaten in years. "Well, either way, she's getting better about it." The girl decided to continue for the silence was mocking her. She often got the time to talk to her mother about everything that was happening since they had lots of time for that, but she hadn't caught her father up on any news that was going on in her life recently because he was only home in the evenings. He didn't specifically ask her how her day was, or what she has been up to lately but she wanted to tell him.

Expectantly and patiently, Astrid looked at him for what felt like forever, stuffing his mouth with anything and everything he could. But she quickly realized it was useless. She pierced her lips together awkwardly, the silence was haunting her. It was too quiet. Glancing in all directions, she finally focused on her plate to start eating.

Mã;rÃ-a's eyes moved over to Astrid sadly and she loosened her grip on her cutlery, letting her elbows drop. "Oh, is she?" The woman asked brightly, answering Astrid's previous words so she was not being ignored. She knew she was just trying to get her dad's attention and start a little conversation. What was wrong with that? Astrid only looked up at her. She didn't want to say anything and she knew what her mother was trying to do.

"Well, excuse me." Eirik beamed and Astrid's eyes widened as he violently dropped his cutlery onto his plate so it made a loud and echoing clanking noise, breaking the silence that filled the room. But that was not the kind of silence-breaker that either Astrid or her mother had wanted. "I'm trying to have a decent meal here but all I can hear is your bickering." He spat out the last word.

"It wasn't bickering." Astrid mumbled ashamedly as she looked down at her lap and fiddled with her fingernails, too scared to look into her father's eyes.

"Then what is, Astrid? Because my definition is just about the same as you telling me all theseâ€| things, shoving them in my face. When can I just get some peace and quiet around here?"

"You get enough of it when you just sit around not even speaking to anyone." Astrid raised her voice, and nearly clenched her teeth, her voice rising with anger by the word. She was getting tired of this bullshit. The girl knew she was talking back and she wasn't allowed to, nobody in any Viking house was allowed to. She was raised to obey her parents but she felt like she couldn't take it any longer.

"Astrid." Her mother attempted to say calmly, her voice soft as she warned Astrid to not go any farther for she couldn't bear to see what her husband would do. She had seen it before, he has done it enough.



His anger would rise to the top and he would yell for what felt like forever, he had even hit MÃ;rÃ-a a few times and Odin knows why. The woman was even scared of her own husband sometimes and standing up to him was only going to make things worse. She had learned that a long time ago.

Eirik had never liked Astrid as a daughter, he thought she was a mistake and she shouldn't even be in the family. Astrid had known that; she always had. It broke her heart but she tried so hard to not let it get to her. She had only thought about it maybe once in her whole life because she tried so hard to successfully keep it out of her mind.

It was silent. Astrid decided she didn't need to say any more. She looked at her mother, then back at Eirik. His glare felt like it was piercing into her soul, but she would not let it scare her. "I'm full." She mumbled as she quickly crumpled up her napkin and dropped it on her plate, then stood up and pushed out her chair to leave to her room.

## 2. Chapter 2

I don't know about you guys but that was a really long wait. And that's coming from the writer.

Here's why: I was planning on finishing this chapter within like three days but it ended up taking me much longer than I had hoped. For some reason, this chapter specifically gave me trouble. I got stuck numerous times while I was only two pages in (not to mention I redid those two pages three times), then one day I totally just gave up, then I got stuck near the end of the story, and then kept getting caught up in homework and projects and tests and just general occupational life hazards. But thankfully I have regained my motivations and am back on track! I'm really gonna try and update as quick as I can from now on. I'm NOT gonna let that happen again.

Also, thank you so much for all the kind reviews, and the favorites and follows. I really appreciate it, so keep doing it because without your reviews I wouldn't be inspired to keep updating!

For most of this chapter, I listened to "Kingdom Come" by The Civil Wars. I suggest you please listen to that, because it's a true fact when people say music is the most motivational thing in the world. And in this case, it just hits you in the right feel and puts yourself in the character's position a little better. I really like suggesting songs for you guys and I'll definitely be doing that more often from now on.

Brace yourselves! A lot more happens in this chapter. But nevertheless, enjoy! :)

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 2<p>

The sun was nearly under the horizon and the dark of night was filling the room quickly. Astrid sat on the floor of Hiccup's bedroom, leaning on one hand with both her legs to the side as Hiccup

sat cross-legged in front of her. Astrid had walked over there in the late afternoon after finishing laundry and cleaning Stormfly's stable, before stopping at her house to change into a plain white summer dress that reached to the middle of her thighs and tightened just under her breasts and then flowed loose like a curtain from there and down, with a dark green, long-sleeved cardigan for the walk there.

There were a few lit candles around them, sharing a late picnic dinner on the floor of Hiccup's bedroom, atop a wool blanket with a basket of bread next to them and a couple bowls of soup. They only had a picnic dinner a couple of times, all in the same spot; Hiccup's floor. They preferred that rather than outdoors, since they had an insane amount of privacy and also the ability to do it at night.

Astrid remembered getting that funny feeling when she had woken up that morning. There was always that one day that managed to stand out from the others, and for some reason, Astrid couldn't seem to find the right words that explained why she was so excited for this night. She and Hiccup had had plenty of days to themselves where they would just talk about the most random things they could think of and just have a good time like any other wild teenagers would, but she still got that warm feeling of excitement and nervousness all throughout the day.

They talked for nearly an hour as they ate; chatting about what they did that day, although a lot of it was Hiccup telling her what was going on in the forge lately. He worked there nearly all day, from early morning to mid-afternoon. Sometimes he would get a day off, but sometimes he would even have to take a night shift when there was extra work to be done or Gobber wasn't to show up. So, Astrid guessed she couldn't blame him for talking so much of it, even though she wouldn't mind either way. She loved to hear him talk about all his latest projects that he was working on, and magnificent ideas that were soon to become projects. But it was mostly the way he talked. She found it fascinating how he would always use hand gestures for emphasis as he spoke, while he would knit his brows together in concentration, barely even looking up at her because he was looking down at his gesturing hands instead as he got into great detail about his complicated machines and contraptions that Astrid didn't really understand but went with anyway.

She laughed. "Don't hurt yourself, Blacksmith." Astrid joked, holding out her hands cautiously.

"Trust me, I already have." He said with a chuckle and Astrid laughed once more. She was sure he had.

He loved hearing her laugh. It always made him realize how lucky he was to have such a beautiful girl in his grasp. He had had a crush on her ever since he was ten when he first laid eyes on her, and he remembered every bit of it- her hair was in two braids that stuck out stiffly because she had so much hair, and she rarely ever looked at him. He wasn't even sure if she knew he existed for a few years. He would always stare at her dreamily when she walked by the forge window, with his head lazily resting in his palm while Gobber was teaching him how to properly handle an anvil, but the boy was never listening. And then Gobber would always have to shut the window so his apprentice could stop drooling out of it.

Seven years later and he had Astrid Hofferson in his bedroom.

"So, what about you, what have you been up to?" Hiccup looked up at her curiously as he took a hungry bite out of his bread, his voice beyond casual.

"Eh," She attempted to sound careless, shrugging her shoulders and twisting her mouth in all directions as she looked at the ground then back at Hiccup. "Same old, same old." She replied.

He could tell she was lying. Astrid's lack of successful acting worked to Hiccup's advantage a lot often, and when he knew she was keeping something to herself he wouldn't give up on getting it out of her. "Ah," He began. "Life's too boring to make memories. I see."

"No," Astrid said with a laughing grin, nodding her head. She lost the smile quickly. "I mean, yeah, life isâ€¦" She paused, searching for the right words. "You can't expect too much of it." She summed up quickly to go the easy way, not even sure if she was sounding accurate enough, or even making sense. The girl did always think life on Berk got a little boring sometimes. Well- \_more \_than sometimes. She never felt she had any sort of ability of adventuring or experimenting after discovering every nook and cranny the island could possibly hold. She had always been a curious girl and loved to try new things.

"Noâ€¦" His voice extended, slowly sticking out his neck as he looked at Astrid. Hiccup knew that Astrid specifically wanted to be happier with her life at this point, and he could understand that. It happens to everyone at least once in their life and he wanted to make sure she knew that. He knew she had that patience hiding inside of her somewhere. And he wouldn't give up on finding it.

She looked back up at him, blinked, confused as to what he was saying. He looked at her, and she couldn't much pick out the expression he had at that moment. "You're life's already there, Astrid." Her eyes remained on him, a blank yet interested look on her face. "You just have to pay the effort to see it." His voice was soft, and Astrid remained her eyes on him, shame on her face. She frowned, looking at the ground. "And \_with \_that effort," He started again, moving in closer to her. "You'd be surprised how much you can get out of it."

Dammit. He always had to be right. She knew he was, and could admit that she often avoided the realization of the good in the world. But she found it hard not to when all you're doing with your life is what others tell you to. Astrid smirked quickly, tensing her chest. "Like what?" She asked. She realized how surprisingly closer he had gotten to her, on his knees in front of her, her back against the end of Hiccup's bed.

"Well," The boy shrugged his shoulders, lifted his eyebrows. "Memories." He said simply, smiling.

Her mouth twitched into a smirk. "I can make memories." She scoffed, her voice confident and challenging, giving him that only-Astrid look that he knew so well and loved.

Hiccup crawled the rest of the way in next to her as he wrapped a delicate arm around her bare shoulders. His hands were warm a top her pale skin and she suddenly felt a lot more soothed and comfortable than she was before as she craned her neck to rest her head on his shoulder, a light frown on her face. She scooted her body slightly to get more comfortable, sinking into him.

"I know you can." He said softly, looking directly forward and rubbing her shoulder. "I know you can."

And Astrid felt herself drift off.

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Something seemed odd. \_Ah.\_ She thought. \_The light. \_The light? Astrid opened her eyes, her eyebrows creased sharply. Normally when she'd wake up she'd be able to see the brightness even through her closed eyelids, she was used to that. But it was dark. And something felt different. She darted her eyes everywhere without moving an inch. The first thing she saw was the moon, as she glanced out the window that she could see directly from where she was laying. Then she saw a desk by the far wall. She didn't have a desk. There were papers scattered all over the surface andâ€| blueprints on the walls. That gave it away. She was in Hiccup's room, let alone his \_lap\_, with her body splayed across the floor as Hiccup sat against the footboard of his bed, a motionless hand on her arm. She must have slid into his lap after she fell asleep. She widened her eyes, jolted up. She felt Hiccup jump from her sudden movement, but she didn't must have been hours past midnight. She didn't mean to stay \_this\_ long.

"Whoa," He gasped. "You scared me." She heard him say with a slight playful chuckle in his voice, although she wasn't really paying attention.

Sitting up with her back to Hiccup, her breathing seemed to be getting heavier. Astrid jolted around quickly. "Uhhâ€| I'm sorry. I didn't mean to sleep over." She scurried up to her feet shakily.

Hiccup's eyes followed her. He was silent for a moment, surprised she didn't already know that it was okay. "Astrid, it's fine. I don't mind." He grinned.

"No, you don't understand." Her voice was rushed, unstable as she jolted everywhere looking for her cardigan. She had to get home. It was much too far past midnight and if her parents weren't already looking for her, they were waiting for her to come back. For \_hours.\_ She couldn't get herself into trouble \_again\_ \_about\_ every little thing she did that, really, didn't deserve punishment at all in her opinion. But she gave up on the attempt of reasoning long ago.

Hiccup looked up at her confused, his eyebrows furrowed and his hands held in front of him. "U-Understand what?" He said really wasn't a big deal to him- her sleeping over. And he thought she already knew that.

Astrid grabbed her cardigan from a nearby chair and slid into it quickly. She looked at Hiccup for the first time. His face was

confused and worried. "I'm sorry," She shook her head. "I had fun. I did." She was heading for the door, and Hiccup stood up faster than he thought he could and chased after her. She felt terrible for leaving this way without an explanation. But she kept walking. She galloped down the stairs and stopped in front of the front door, Hiccup following behind her.

"W-wait, what are you doing? It's too cold outside."

"I'll be fine." She said quickly, adjusting herself one last time. Her entire face was furrowed with her eyes wide and looking deep into his. He could only stare back. "Thanks for everything." She reached for the knob. "Really." And she swung the door open. The cold breeze immediately blew into the house, sending a chill throughout Hiccup's body as he heard the trickling sound of the rain falling on the hard concrete outside.

"Astrid," He said to her, but she closed the door before he could speak. It echoed throughout the house and everything went quiet. He stood there, shocked. He wasâ€¦ \_confused.\_ He just stood there, stared at the closed door in front of him. He didn't know what to do. It was so quick and panicky, it happened too fast for him. He figured that chasing after her even more wouldn't result in anything. Maybe she just had a curfew, although he probably would have known. She never told him she didâ€¦ but he decided to go with that. Just to make things easierâ€¦

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Astrid opened the door to her house cautiously. She was hoping her parents were asleep, and assumed they \_should\_ be at this time of night without a reason that they \_wouldn't\_ \_be\_ unless they knew she wasn't in her bed. But she preferred not to get into the depth of it. She was just thinking too much again.

Astrid hunched her shoulders, being as quiet as she possibly could as she closed the door behind her and turned around, almost ready to run straight to the stairs and up into her room. Then she froze, stuck out her chest. The room was dim and quiet and her mother was nowhere to be seen, but she couldn't think of that right now. What caught her attention more was that Eirik sat silently in his stupid rocking chair in the living room, reading another one of his stupid books. He was facing her. It was as if he purposely positioned himself to face the door for when she was to come home.

Astrid didn't know if she should say anything or wait for \_him\_ to.

The sound of the rain and the howling wind flooded the room, the sparks of the fireplace crackling and crackling in the air. Eirik silently set down his book on the side table next to his chair without even looking at her. She waited. His face was serious. When wasn't it? But he looked like he was trying to hide his temper by remaining calm- how hard that must've been for him. Eirik looked up at her. She swallowed, keeping that straight face. Whatever he was about to yell at her, she was ready for. She figured the yelling part wasn't \_so\_ bad. All she had to do was stand and wait for him to finish before just going back to her room. No work required. It felt like forever before either of them said anything. She was a little scared of something deep inside that she couldn't figure out what,

but Astrid decided she wouldn't let it show anymore. Fear was for children.

She could tell he was going to ask her where she was by the look on his face, staring at her expectantly. He didn't need to say it, and they both knew that.

"I was out." She finally said much too quiet, but remained casual.

He gave her a look that spoke as if she gave him the wrong answer. The chair creaked sharply as Eirik used his hands to push himself up. As he stood up, he took a loud and deep breath, making the atmosphere a little tenser than it already was. The man stepped forward slowly towards her, then stopped. "Where were you?" His voice was hoarse and demanding as if saying it \_that \_way going to make her tell him. \_Was that not the right answer? \_She thought. Astrid raised her chin and opened her mouth to say something before she felt a sudden, unexpected pang to the cheek.

Her head whipped around from the force, her loose hair lashing in her face as she took a large step back and ended up tripping over the little table behind her. The crash echoed throughout the house, everything on that table falling to the ground and on top of her. It was a terrible sound. Astrid could've sworn her vision went black for a few moments. She lay there, gasped as she hit the ground. She was scared, and she could feel her heart violently pound in her chest as she opened her eyes and started to feel her face immediately prickly with pain. The hardwood floor was just centimeters from her vision. She scrunched up her face, felt the tears well up in her big blue eyes. Astrid had never been hit by her father before, let alone \_anyone. \_Although she felt stupid to not think it was ever gonna happen eventually. Her eyes were getting wetter by the second. She didn't think she had ever tried so hard to hold in tears.

So she ran.

Tripping over everything that had fallen as she rushed to get up, Astrid ran out the front door, leaving it open behind her. She wanted to be as far away from this place as possible. "Astrid!" She heard the voice of her father somewhere behind her, but she didn't stop. She didn't \_want \_to stop. She just wanted to run. The rain poured on her skin as she paced down the front steps of her house and onto the muddy grass at the bottom and down the path.

"Astrid!" She heard him again, the sound of her father's voice calling her name still lingered in her hearing, gradually fading away as she got farther. Sobbing and panting, she didn't care where she was headed; she just wanted to get out of this mess. She stumbled over her own feet, looking at the ground and finding herself sprinting through a patch of tall bushes, the thorns and branches scraping past her bare legs and the loud sound of the thick branches roughly brushing past her ears as she could feel the agonizing pain all over her body. She grunted, escaped never-ending sobs as she ran through the crowd of branches and sharp thorns. The pain etched at her, prickling and scratching at her bare legs and arms.

Astrid stumbled out into the open again, almost tripping and falling out from the amount of open space welcoming her. She stopped, saw the open space of just another part of Berk ahead of her. And that was

when she realized she didn't know what she was doing or where was she was going. She felt lost, scared. She was too shocked. The whole night was unbelievable to her. She may never love her father again, never look at that house the same, or never look at him the same.

She looked around, panting with a million signs of worry and fear in her eyes. She found herself in a familiar cul-de-sac of Berk's houses. She must have been on the other side of the village by now. It was located on the outer rim of the island far enough away from her house as she wanted to be right now. But she was still in Berk, not that she hadn't expected that. You can't escape an island in the middle of nowhere.

But that was the problem.

She was still trapped, still stuck in this prison of a life. And that was when she realized she couldn't get away. Astrid knew that she had to accept it no matter what. She will wake up in the same room, eat the same breakfast and do the same chores. She was sure she was just over exaggerating, but she was the type to get bored easily from the same things over and over again. She will always be in the same village on the same island and she realized that it was the one thing that she had to live with.

Now, she didn't know what to do or where to go. She was out here now, and away from everything else. That was good enough for her. But she just couldn't go back. Not now. She was freezing with the rain hitting on her every inch of skin and clothing, her hair soaking wet and sticking to the sides of her face. Her legs must have been scratched up bad, maybe even the hem of her dress too. But she didn't bother to think about it or even look down. She wouldn't be able to see through this rain anyway. This night was just too much for her. Her scratched up skin, her stinging cheek. It all hurt. A little too much for Astrid Hofferson.

The girl looked around, examined the street of houses she was now in as she hugged herself and rubbed her arms, tightly pulling her soaking wet cardigan over her chest. There was nothing unusual about any of these houses, all forming a half circle around a miniature garden of bushes. There were no porch lights on, and no house lights from the inside either. She knew where she was, she had been in this area a few times for when her and Ruffnut would spend a couple of hours at the twins' house to just do everything she couldn't do without her best girl friend, Ruffnut. Then she the slightest hint of hesitation, Astrid immediately paced over to the house with the Zippleback head. She knocked, staying a couple of steps down and waiting for a few moments with nothing to occupy herself with but hug her arms for the warmth she clearly desired.

She saw the door open through the mist of the heavy rain as she stood a short distance away, the dim light from the inside of the house flooding out the doorframe. It was Ruffnut who answered. The twin squinted through the rain, poking her head out the door as she furrowed her face, confused as to who on earth would be knocking at this time of night and in this weather. Then she jumped, her eyes widening and her eyebrows shooting up as she recognized Astrid helplessly standing there at the bottom of the stairs.

"Astrid, what are you doing?!" Ruffnut asked, partially yelling at

her and partially yelling over the sound of the beating rain. Ruffnut had been awake at that time. She often stayed awake pretty late when her parents weren't home for they had been on a trading trip for a few days at a neighboring island, so she often liked to stay up and just quietly sit around in the house instead of going to bed. Besides, Ruffnut was never the one to go to bed on time anyway.

"I can't go home." Astrid called to her, shouting over the rain. Ruffnut still had no idea in Hel what Astrid thought she was doing, but she could see some sort of desperation in the girls face as Astrid stared at her, waiting with her eyebrows creased sharply and her big blue squinting eyes looking up at her. The twin could tell there was something wrong, but Ruffnut wasn't going to ask. She didn't need to. The two of them had been best friends for years, and they looked after each other. And in those years, they learned a lot about one another, enough to know up to the point where they understood each other more than anyone else. And that was the thing Astrid loved about Ruffnut; she just understood. She would feel for her only because they had no other girl friends but each other. Astrid for the most part, just felt so comfortable around her because she felt allowed to act as feminine as she wanted to be. They would braid each other's hair, talk about boys, have sleepoversâ€¦ it was all a part of their valuable bond. And they couldn't find that bond anywhere else, or with anyone else.

The twin shook her head, extremely disappointed (and still so confused) as to why Astrid came all the way out here in the middle of night for Odin knows what reason. Gods did Ruffnut always know that girl was crazy. Sometime she never understood her, but she couldn't not love her for that.

"Come on." Ruffnut motioned her to come in as she slightly rolled her eyes, only because she still didn't understand that girl's craziness and stupidity. But she loved her at the most. Ruffnut was like a mother to her. After all, she was older by almost a year.

Astrid kept her head down as she made her way up the couple of steps, remaining her arms tightly hugged around her body as she stepped inside, and Ruffnut closed the door.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Replies: <strong>(I forgot to add these in earlier)

Sweettea8: Thank you very much! I'm glad you enjoy my stories. Yes, Astrid and Hiccup are both roughly around 17 in this story, about 2 or 3 years after the first film. I am all for Hiccstrid (hardcore shipper) so you will be getting lots of that and even more in my other/upcoming stories! Adulthood and independence is exactly what I'm going for here. It is a big part of Astrid and Hiccup's stories and I look forward to sharing them with you!

Tasermom's Partner: Thank you. The thing with writing for How to Train Your Dragon is that you need to be historically accurate. And I, for one, find that a little tough at some times, and you may need to pull a few strings every now and then. The way I see her and Hiccup's relationship is exactly how I wrote it and I'm sorry I'm going for the clichÃ©s here. But thank you very much for your opinion and advice. I hope it will help me to improve. :)



### 3. Chapter 3

Well, here's a shorter chapter.

I think I might leave this story to rest for a while after chapter 3 here, because I've got quite a bit of other things that I really wanna write. So, I might be putting Small Town on hiatus. But, don't worry! I'm not abandoning it, I promise!

\*Please note that I also changed my Pen Name and my icon, if you haven't noticed. I've decided I didn't want people that know my Tumblr to find my FanFiction so easily, considering they both had the exact same name and icon. But, you guys still get my update e-mails, right? And if you've been with this account since the beginning you would know that I've actually changed my FanFiction 'identity' like, 5 times. XD

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 3<p>

Ruffnut was always like this; often worrying about Astrid a little too much and then lecturing her about why you shouldn't do this and why you shouldn't do that. She was like a second mother to her, and enjoyed that role very much without a doubt. But it was all because she just wanted to look out for her. Even her own self didn't know why she looked at Astrid that way. She guessed she never really had a little sibling she loved to pick on except for Tuffnut, but he was just obnoxious, in her mind. Ruffnut and Tuffnut were the only children in that house, and they never really had as much care as the girl had for Astrid when they were growing up. If Ruffnut never grew up with that delicacy, then that was all she wanted for Astrid. She was just 'her little baby' who she loved to tease and make fun of but love her nevertheless. She was her younger sister, and they both loved to look at it that way.

Now, Astrid was aware of the fact that Ruffnut tried so hard to look out for her a little more than she needed to, but she still didn't mind the way Ruffnut would push her around and sometimes treat her like a child. She was older, and they were best friends, so Astrid could understand that. She would have normally gotten sick of it by now but then she realizes that the only reason Ruffnut would do that is because she cares about her, and that made her feel so good inside. Astrid never had an older sister, or any siblings for that matter, so who else would talk her into making the right decisions when her mom wasn't there? Besides, the way Ruffnut would give her advice and comfort when she needed it the most was the most amazing feeling in the world because sometimes she felt like she couldn't get that anywhere else.

Astrid listened silently as she sat on the end of Ruffnut's bed with her hands in her lap and her eyes to the wooden floor, her clothes and hair still damp from the rain outside. Her fingers fidgeted together nervously as she listened to sound of Ruffnut's rambling voice, pacing back and forth in front of her- getting quieter when she'd turn her head and walk further, then louder again when she'd reach in front of her- and all over again. She didn't know how long Ruffnut had been lecturing her, more like scolding her for being

out in that stupid cold rain. She hadn't really been listening much intently, though at this point. She got bored after about a minute of it when she realized that Ruff was pretty much just saying the same things over and over again.

"I can't believe you would do that. What in Hel were you thinking?! You could have frozen to death out there." The girl instructed, her hands gesturing to nothing in particular as she continued to pace back and forth in front of Astrid. It was quite cold that night, and she couldn't blame Ruffnut for the way she was reacting, so she had no say in this. All she had to remember was that this was just her way of showing that she cares, and Astrid appreciated that more than anything. If there was one thing needed to know about Ruffnut, it was that she just had a different way of doing things.

"Ohh, just wait until I tell your mother about this." She continued, grumbling through her frustration and looking down at the ground. Astrid realized the twin hadn't even looked at her for the past five minutes because she was too busy rambling nonstop, not even giving Astrid a chance to reply before she would start talking again. But Astrid just remained her eyes to the ground below her, her mouth twitching as she chewed on the inside of her cheek, waiting for her to finish or at least take a breath.

It was far, far past midnight. Sitting here, Astrid could feel the weight of her body pulling her down, thirsty for an hour of rest. She had been everywhere tonight and all she wanted at this moment was to sleep. Sitting on this bed, she couldn't help thinking how easy it was to just fall on her back and close her eyes, but she couldn't with Ruffnut talking like this. She scanned the room, her head barely moving as her eyes lay upon the other bed across the room where Tuffnut slept. Luckily, he was at Snotlout's tonight. If Tuff ever saw Astrid like this he would only make fun of her for being the cry baby he thought she was at times. Sometimes when Astrid would come over and Tuffnut was here, he would only tease her and be a jerk to the girls. But, what can you expect from Tuffnut Thorston? That's why she couldn't be more thankful that she was here with Ruffnut and nobody else. Astrid just felt allowed to break down, and do anything in front of her or with her that no one would ever know and she wouldn't have to worry about.

"Are you listening to me?" Astrid snapped out of her thoughts at the sound of Ruffnut's voice. She looked up as the twin groaned frustratingly, clenching her fists and pointing them in the air, nowhere in particular. Astrid was like a dog on a leash in Ruffnut's eyes; always wanting to explore and do what she wasn't supposed to but she did it anyway. Sometimes that girl would never learn, and teaching her was like teaching a child. Ruffnut knew everything about her by the way she acted ever since a few years ago. She knew Astrid just wanted to be able to do her own thing all the time, but she still needed some sort of guardian for that so she didn't run off unexpectedly or something. Astrid was definitely the one to do that.

The girl didn't have a caring guardian besides her mother, and when Mā; rÄ-a wasn't around, Ruffnut was the first in line. She had even told Astrid's mother that she'd make sure she didn't do anything too spontaneous, because Astrid was known for that quite commonly. Sure, she knew how to handle an axe and defend herself if she needed to, but curiosity wasn't exactly about defense, and it could sometimes

take her too far. That probably wasn't the route anyone was looking for.

Ruffnut stopped for the slightest pause, and Astrid had built up some sort of hope in her stomach before she only started talking again; it was something about 'consequences' and 'thinking', but Astrid just sat there ashamedly, realizing that Ruffnut's say wasn't making her feel any better. \_So much for that idea\_. Although she knew Ruffnut was absolutely right about everything she was telling her. It would have been best not to run out in that freezing rain with nothing but bare legs and a loose, thin cardigan although she didn't really have a choice. She just panicked and didn't think. She was lucky to be welcomed into the Thorston's home tonight.

Astrid didn't want to say anything, what good would it do? She had given up on that a long time ago, and she figured that fending would only make Ruffnut ramble even more. Either that or she wouldn't have been listening in the first place. Astrid looked up at Ruffnut from underneath her bangs, barely moving her head.

"What were you doing out there, anyway?" Ruffnut asked as she turned her back to face the tall wooden dresser against the wall, and began to dig her hands through the drawers. The dresser reached to about the crook of Ruffnut's chest, with very few little trinkets on the surface, with a large dirty looking glass positioned in the center.

Astrid could barely see what she was doing, her back now facing her as she could only vision Ruffnut's elbows jolting out and moving in all directions as she continued to vigorously scour through the drawers, her voice still muttering under her breath. And she realized that this was the first time tonight Ruffnut had actually asked her a question and let her speak.

She sighed softly, her entire mind hesitant. She wanted to tell Ruffnut what had really happenedâ€| she would understand, wouldn't she? Of course she would. Astrid was sure of it, and she knew she was going to have to tell her eventually because Ruffnut was the best when coming to identify a lie. There was no point in trying that.

"My dad hit me." The girl said finally, her voice sounding careless, yet almost shaky. She figured that saying it now and outright would be much easier than the other way around. Dropping hints or explaining it in detail would only make her feel worse, and remind her even more about it when she really didn't want to. It felt weird to speak after such a long time of silence.

Ruffnut couldn't help but realize how soft, simple and quiet her voice was. -\_Too \_quiet. And that was when she realized that this was beyond what she had thought. Althoughâ€| not quite shockingly.

Her head snapped up from the drawers and immediately stopped every inch of movement in her; her searching arms slowing down to a stop to rest on the wall of the open drawer in front of her as her eyes widened, shocked, and all of a sudden \_guilty\_. She remained still and quiet, didn't turn around to face Astrid for she suddenly felt terrible for making Astrid feel worse than she already was this whole time. Hel, that girl had enough to deal with today so why did she have to go and make it worse? But, she didn't \_know, \_so really, it's

not her fault.

Butâ€| her \_dad? \_Wow. Ruffnut knew Astrid's father, and knew everything that went on in that family more than anybody else. Nobody really talked about what happens in the Hofferson house because nobody really \_knew\_. And those that did, just remained quiet. But Astrid had told Ruffnut everything, so a part of her actually wasn't that shocked by what she was hearing. She just never thought it would happen \_now\_. Not today. She didn't feel that she needed to ask questions or even open her mouth. That would only make it worse for Astrid's case. She could tell the girl was already heartbroken tonight. Her wide eyes relaxed, nearly transforming into a sad and confused expression, although she all of a sudden knew everything just by those four words. There was just a part that somehow couldn't believe it- or didn't \_want \_to believe it. She dropped her shoulders, her eyes darting everywhere in front of her, her mouth in a thin line as dozens of thoughts had flooded her mind. She didn't know what to do.

Ruffnut blinked and turned her head with her eyebrows lightly creased as she laid her eyes upon Astrid. She was still sitting there, her eyes looking everywhere but her face, trying to avoid Ruffnut's gaze as the girl's hands fidgeted together continuously with her head down low. Ruffnut could see the sadness in her face, couldn't imagine what was possibly going on in her head right now. The twin sighed quietly as the silence remained. Neither of them knew how long they had been like this, the sound of the faint rain and wind still storming outside through the walls of the house. But for some reason, it didn't feel long at all.

Astrid's gaze remained to her lap, realizing the tiredness of her eyes and her exhausted body. "Here," She heard Ruffnut, not even having the slightest chance to look up and see what she was talking about before a pile of garments suddenly hit her chest and fell into her hands. Her head instinctively snapped up, her face confused. "Put these on."

Astrid creased her brows sharply, but didn't say anything. She looked down and held the clothing out in front of her, examining the garments in her hands. It was a loose and thin tunic, the color a light and faint yellow with a pair of old, black wool pants that looked like they had been cut from the bottom so they lengthened up to the upper thigh to look as a pair of shorts. They were quite nice actually for an outfit of old cloths that were clearly used only when doing messy work or sleeping in. She was surprised she had never seen Ruffnut wear these, even around the house. She \_should \_have at least once because Astrid had been over at the Thorston's more than enough, and was most likely to see her in them at some point. But then again, Ruffnut was never the one that made a big fuss about changing her outfit every day.

"I'll be downstairs." The girl said as she began to walk out the bedroom door, her voice tired and plain and unable to be identified with any emotion. Astrid quickly snapped out of her thoughts on the garments as she stood up quickly, letting them fall out of her lap as Ruffnut had already made her way out the bedroom door. Astrid ran up to her, grasping the doorframe with both hands as she let all her weight lean, sticking her head out the doorframe and craning her neck to the side slightly. "Hey, Ruffnut?" She asked.

Ruff stopped, turned her head to see Astrid standing there in the doorway; the most innocent smile on her face, no matter how slight it was.

"Thanks." She said, her tone smooth with a hint of a crack in her voice. Ruffnut could tell by the way she was looking at her that she meant that more than anything, and Ruffnut couldn't help when the corners of her lips forged into a smile for the first time that night.

She looked at Astrid, her eyes gazing deep into hers, and that was when she realized that she really had helped her out a lot tonight. And she felt good about that. She loved Astrid as a friend more than anything, and she suddenly felt a pang of happiness inside her because of that.

Ruffnut inhaled, her chest rising heavily as she closed her mouth, then opened it again. She motioned her head to the side. "Get some rest." She said with a faint smirk, and turned around again to head downstairs.

Astrid smiled widely, shook her head, her chest tensing into the smallest breath of laughter, for she knew clearly well that Ruffnut welcomed her beyond words.

She was just never the one to show it.

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Astrid had woken up quite early that morning being the riser she was. The sun was completely above the horizon and was shining like any other day, although it was only the dawn of morning and the chirping birds had just come out. Daylight on Berk's mornings often came before any of the Vikings were even awake.

She didn't need to try and be the least bit quiet as she snuck past the sleeping Ruffnut, because that girl was the heaviest sleeper Astrid had ever known who would almost never wake up to anything. She had known that full well from past experience. She quickly changed out of Ruffnut's borrowed clothing and into her own garments that she had left to hang on the footboard of the bed the night before. They were dry by now, although she was definitely going to change out of it as soon as she got home because she couldn't stand the feeling being filthy as she was, even though it wasn't that bad. But she had been in wet then dried clothes that resulted in a strange, grassy smell that spread to her skin, adding that she hadn't had a shower the day before and her hair was tangled as Hel.

Astrid looked back at Ruffnut one more time; her face was mashed up against the mattress as she lazily lay on her stomach with her hands crookedly by her sides and her mouth slightly open as Astrid stood on the opposite end of the room by the door as she finalized the adjustments of her clothing. Ruffnut was by far sound asleep, probably dreaming about whatever that girl thinks of in her \_unique \_mind\_

Soon enough, Astrid headed downstairs and immediately hopped out the front door, finding herself pacing quite quickly as she made her way back to her house, for some reason not even wanting to look up at anything or anybody today. It was as if she was trying to hide her

face, which she was in a way. Something inside her felt weird to be out here- walking the same path she had taken last night on what she called a 'tiring journey'. Whenever she would look up in front of her, her imagination could see the exact rain and darkness surrounding her. Just like the night before. And it felt strange. She felt ashamed and didn't even know why. None of these villagers knew what had happened although she still felt embarrassed that it did. Every Viking acted completely normal, she just didn't feel normal. She was too scarred by this place now.

Once she reached her house, she pressed her weight against the heavy door and gripped the knob as she cautiously peeked her head inside and shifted her vision all around the house to scan the place before stepping in completely. It felt weird to be alertly entering your own home as if you weren't supposed to be there and would get caught if you did. She had been gone all night, and nobody knew where she went. She would think that at least her mother would be waiting for her first thing, and was probably up all night for that matter. But the house seemed surprisingly vacant. There was not a human figure in sight, nor a sound.

Although, she figured the silence and the vacancy was a good signal that allowed her to feel safe. Safe. It didn't feel right for her to be using that word in terms of her own home. She walked forward. Her father was nowhere to be seen, thankfully, and considering she hadn't eaten since yesterday, she'd been quite starving for a while now so she quickly grabbed an apple from the wooden fruit bowl on the counter as she brushed past the kitchen and headed up to her room. She needed a bath.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Replies:<strong>

Tasermom's Partner: Well, thanks! 'Cul-de-sac', yeah. Kinda sounds (and spelt) strange, so it sort of questioned me too but I looked it up and apparently it's cul-de-sac. Also, porch lights don't necessarily mean lightbulbs. I am also obviously aware of how I portrayed Astrid's life and Astrid's feelings. How I wrote it is how I picture it, and I try not to include the series in this because I don't really even like the series, to be honest. Sure, she can hop on Stormfly but that's not the point of the story that I'm going for here. Astrid can still feel the way she does. And you're right, she will have to come home eventually: back to her parents and her chores! Thanks for the review!

Sweettea8: Hey! Thanks so much, I'm glad you enjoyed it! You got it spot on.

fantasyfreak23: Thank you, thank you! You have no idea how much that means, I really appreciate it. :) You are a true motivator.

End  
file.